(iv) Increasing the office Maintenance Allowance from Rs. 25/- to Rs. 50/- per month.

(v) Paid leave of 10 days for every half year without provision of carry forward.

(vi) Provision of Severance amount of Rs. 30,000/- in case of retirement or death, if the period of continuous employment of GDS employee is minimum 20 years. However, if a GDS had completed 15 to 20 year of continuous service, the Severance Amount will be Rs. 20,000/-. On absorption to regulár departmental post, the severance amount of Rs. 20,000/- is payable after 15 years of continuous employment.

2. The recommendation regarding grant of pension was not accepted. However element of Severance Amount was introduced. Subsequently this demand was also part of the charter of demands submitted by the Postal Federations in November, 2000. The demand for change of nomenclature of Extra Departmental Agents was accepted by designating them as Gramin Dak Sevaks. As regards demand for pension, no Government-sponsored social security scheme was found feasible.

3. The recommendation for grant of status to the Gramin Dak Sevaks was not accepted even on re-examination of the issue by the Government. Provisions are already available for 75% recruitment to Group 'D' level posts and 50% of postmen's posts in the Department to be made from among the GDSs so that they have an opportunity to better their prospects and enter regular Government service.

(c) In view of above facts there is no proposal to modify the status of GDSs or grant of pension to them.

Internet bandwidth capacity

1194. SHRI C.P. THIRUNAVUKKARASU: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. has abandoned its plan to augment its internet bandwidth capacity;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) if not, the reasons for cancelling tender for bandwidth expansion;

(d) whether the demand from ISPs has been examined before inviting tenders;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) and (b) Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. has not abandoned its plan to augments its internet bandwidth.

(c) Two separate tenders for International Gateway bandwidth were floated, one over Satellite and other over Optical Fibre. The tender for Gateway Bandwidth over Satellite has been finalized and Advance Purchase order issued on 11th July, 2003. The tender for the Gateway Bandwidth over Optical Fibre has to be cancelled as none of the bidders were found technically compliant.

(d) Yes, Sir.

(e) and (f) The requirement of International Gateway Bandwidth for customers including that of the ISPs has been taken into consideration while floating the tenders.

Telecommunication system in Manipur

1195. SHRI RISHANG KEISHING: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the details of Government's scheme to extent normal and regular telecommunication system in the hilly districts of Manipur;

(b) whether Government are satisfied with the pace of the progress;

(c) the factors contributing to the slow progress of the works; and

(d) the steps taken to overcome the same?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) All the five hilly districts of Manipur State are